

26 JUNE 2008

Subject: Alcester Town Plan
Lead Officer: Karen Johnstone
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**Lead Member/
Portfolio Holder:** Councillor S Beese

Summary

This report sets out the assessment of the Alcester Town Plan. Alcester Town Council adopted the Plan on 5 February 2008.

Recommendation

- (1) That the Town Plan is adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant departments of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
 - (2) That the Town Plan is adopted as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
 - (3) That the Town Plan steering group, Town Council and the residents of Alcester, Kinwarton, and Arrow with Weethley parishes be commended for preparing their Town Plan and that they are encouraged to implement and review their Action Plan.**
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1 Background/Information

- 1.1 Town and Parish Plans are community-led projects identifying and surveying the assets, needs, opportunities, problems and solutions of a community. Through 'capacity' and 'consensus building', Parish Plans provide communities with a framework to take stock of the present and to plan for the future.
 - 1.2 The momentum for Parish Plans is continually increasing, with many of the communities in the district having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plans or Appraisals with associated recommendations and Action Plans. Further background information on the process is included in Appendix 5.
 - 1.3 **Background to the submitted Alcester Town Plan**
 - 1.3.1 At the request of the Alcester Town Council, a steering group was set up in Autumn 2005 to assist in the development of a new Town Plan to cover the parishes of Alcester, Kinwarton, and Arrow with Weethley. The Steering Group was formed following invitations to the other Parish Councils, Alcester clubs, schools, local businesses and churches. The Alcester Chronicle and Alcester Town website also ran an article and individuals responded. The Plan was funded by a Stratford District Council Parish Plan preparation grant, funding from the Town Council, and contributions in kind from many volunteers. The Town Council Newsletter and notices at community meeting places were used to report back on progress.
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- 1.3.2 Initial information was gathered at the launch of the Town Plan process at the Annual Street Market with 64 responses received. Local youth leaders, helpers with organisations for the elderly, a local pupil and local employers also gave their views on major issues facing Alcester. This informed the design of a questionnaire sent to all households in the 3 parishes, and a Business questionnaire sent to all local employers.
- 1.3.3 The questionnaire was delivered to all 2,663 households in the 3 parishes and 721 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 27% which is statistically sound for a community of this size. 28 responses were also received to the business survey.
- 1.3.4 The responses were analysed by an external consultant and a report picking out key issues was produced, with the full analysis attached as an appendix. The Town Plan steering group used this report to seek the views of key partner organisations including WCC, SDC, the police and local community groups. Following these consultations a draft Action Plan was drawn up to address the issues identified.
- 1.3.5 The draft Town Plan and Action Plan were presented at a public exhibition in January 2008 with Town Council representatives available to answer questions. The event was publicised in the local papers, on noticeboards and on the Alcester town website. 30 people attended during the day though no feedback forms were completed. The exhibition was then moved to Globe House for a week, with copies of the draft Plan and comments forms available.
- 1.3.6 The Town Council adopted the Town Plan on 5 February 2008. The Town Council has recently re-organised its structure to create committees formally responsible for different areas, so each item on the adopted Action Plan will be a regular item on the relevant Committee's agenda. Sub-committees and Champions from both the Town Council and the community will be adopted for more pressing issues, reporting back to the committees.

1.4 **Alcester Town Plan findings**

- 1.4.1 The findings of the Town Plan, which have informed the Action Plan, cover:

- Essential Services
- Community
- Economy
- Environment
- Parking, traffic and footpaths.

The Town Plan has been prepared employing a range of community participation techniques including questionnaire surveys, public forums and a transparent process of reporting back to the community on progress. The process has generated a range of statistical and qualitative data that has informed the Action Plan and is a useful information source.

- 1.4.2 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Alcester Town Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Town Plan questionnaire.

1.5 **Alcester Town Action Plan**

- 1.5.1 Analysis and responses to the Action Plan are provided in Appendix 5, and the following analysis and comments should be read in conjunction with the Alcester Town Action Plan.
- 1.5.2 The policy position of the Stratford District Local Plan Review is generally supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. The Stratford District Council Planning Service is currently

working on the early stages of a new Core Strategy which will set out a broad vision for planning and development in the district for the next 20 years. The Town Plan contains useful information that will be taken into account in the preparation process. The Stratford District Council Planning Policy team met the Alcester Town Council at the beginning of this process and intends to return to discuss issues at each stage.

- 1.5.3 The priority projects identified by the Vision for Alcester will help address Town Plan action points concerning youth facilities and tourism. Stratford District Council is able to take action on several other issues identified in the Town Plan, through measures including the SDC Play Strategy, Alcester Drainage Forum, and tailored transport schemes. The commitment to take forward delivery of housing to meet local needs is welcomed, and the District Housing Enabler and Stratford District Council Housing Services will work with the Town Council and other partners.
- 1.5.4 Some of the actions have already been progressed by Alcester Town Council, for example in establishing communication with the Police through Alcester PACT.

2 Options available to the Committee

- 2.1 A) Adopt the Town Plan fully: This is a good, well-prepared Town Plan that would be a valuable local information source and material consideration.
- 2.2 B) Adopt parts of the Town Plan: If there are any concerns with certain aspects of the Town Plan, this option would allow Stratford District Council to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have so far been identified to make this option necessary.
- 2.3 C) Not adopt the Town Plan: Stratford District Council would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information, and a material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

3 Members' Comments

- 3.1 Cllr Bowring gave the following comment: "The Plan is a high quality document, and I'm pleased that none of the recommended actions are 'not supported'.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 *Legal/Human Rights Implications*

- 4.1.1 If adopted, the Town Plan will become a material consideration to be taken into account when determining planning applications. The Plan does not conflict with Stratford District Council's policies.

4.2 *Financial*

- 4.2.1 Projects developed through this Town Plan may need funding to take them forward and the recommendations contained in this report should be contained within existing budgets. The District Council operates a Community Grants Scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the Community Grants team may be able to help search for appropriate funding sources. It is hoped that the Town Council and local residents will consider and pursue funding in order to develop their identified action points.

4.3 *Environmental*

- 4.3.1 Many of the actions within this Town Plan aim to increase the sustainability of life within the town by reducing the need to travel to access activities and services.

4.4 Corporate Strategy

- 4.4.1 The Town Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Stratford District Community Plan and the Stratford District Council Corporate Strategy support the range of topic areas and policies in the Action Plan. The Town Plan also complements and helps move forward the District Council's Agenda 21.

4.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.5.1 The consultation for the Plan provided everyone within the community with an opportunity to comment.

5 Risk assessment

- 5.1 The actions recommended within this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the Town Plan, adopt the Town Plan as a local information source and adopt it as a material consideration. There are no identified major risks associated with these actions.
- 5.2 Choosing to not adopt the Town Plan would risk losing the chance to adopt a valuable source of local information and a useful material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Town Plan Steering Group, the Town Council and residents of Alcester, Kinwarton, and Arrow with Weethley should be commended and congratulated on completing their Town Plan, and are encouraged by Stratford District Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.
- 6.2 The Alcester Town Plan is a good example of how a community can prepare a Plan that is both a good source of local information and provides a sound basis through the Action Plan to address the needs and aspirations of the community.

Pat Reid

HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers:

Alcester draft Town Plan final report September 2007

Alcester draft Action Plan 2008-12

Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015

Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Corporate Strategy 2008-12